

The Wake of
Katherine O'Brian

A Play in two Acts
"Of death and
friendship"

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FIRST DRAFT
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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Bobby Hennessey	videographer	16	male
Sarah Walsh	a guest	50ish	female
Sister Margaret	a nun	40ish	female
Father Patrick Flynn	the prist	50ish	male
Katie O'Donnell	friend	40ish	female
Marry Sweeny	friend	40ish	female
Anna Hennessey	friend	40ish	female
Patricia O'Malley	friend	40ish	female
The crowd	guests		

ACT ONE

Saint Michael's Parish conference hall with a large free standing two sided fireplace in the center of the room. On one side are tables with dining chairs. At the far side is a large window overlooking the yard and the church off in a short distance. To the back is a double door to the outside. On the other side are lounge chairs settees and a few sofas each with a side table or coffee table. In the back corner is a wet bar maned by a bartender. There is a single door that leads to the rectory. On each side of the fireplace are tiered buffet tables filled with food.

DR. JUDITH BROWNE's consulting room in a New York Health Center. There is a main door to the reception area of the practice and a back door. It is a post-war building, with Victorian trimmings around the main door and the frames. This play goes further in describing the setting.

This format uses Times New Roman font.

Notice that the opening description uses the Action element in this form.

Stage direction, however, uses a parenthetical element and is formatted as below.

This is one type of format for dramatic stage play. You can modify the elements any way you want by going to Format>Elements.

(IRISH FOLK MUSIC PLAYS IN THE
BACKGROUND.)

BOBBY HENNESSY

(BOBBY, still in his Catholic school uniform and with video camera in hand, methodically moves through the conference hall collecting interviews.

Leaving one interviewee BOBBY heads over
to Sarah Walsh)

Please say a few words about Ms. Flynn Ms. Walsh

SARAH WALSH

Well...

(SARAH takes a sip of her cocktail)

Everyone at the church loved Katherine, you know, we worked together in the administrative office you know. She never had an unkind word for any one.

(SARAH looks through the fireplace at a
table where four women are seated)

But I wouldn't say that for her close fiends. You know she had a hard life being a mother with no husband and all.

(SARAH takes another sip of her drink, leans
into the camera and whispers)

And you know the parish doesn't pay us all that well.

(SARAH sits back in her chair finishes off
her drink sits back in her chair with a
moment of silence, her eyes grow dreamy
and gray)

I will miss her, she never talked much about herself. She was a good listener. On our breaks I used to tell her about myself, she was the only one that ever really listened to me. And when she answered me or talked back to me she heard every word I said and responding to what I said.

(SARAH takes sip of her empty drink)

I think I need another drink.

BOBBY HENNESSY

Thank you Ms. Walsh.

(BOBBY, somewhat uncomfortable fidgets
over the video camera turning it off.

Looking around and sees SISTER MARGARET, his favorite teacher, is now alone on one of the settees and he swiftly maneuvers over to her. He smiles with warm relief.)

BOBBY HENNESSY

Can I interview you now Sister Margaret,

(SISTER MARGARET smiles a warm a loving smile and pats the seat next to her BOBBY sits next to her)

SISTER MARGARET

How is the video taping going Bobby?

BOBBY HENNESSY

Very well sister, almost have half the people interviewed. Thank you for suggesting to Father Flynn that I do it.

SISTER MARGARET

I know you would do a great job Bobby. Now turn the camera on and lets get started.

(SISTER MARGARET touches BOBBY's hand that is holding the camera BOBBY starts recording.)

SISTER MARGARET

I met Katherine at the order of Dominican Sisters of Our Lady of the Rosary and we became close friends. It is not easy to become a nun and the first year is the hardest. We shared everything that year, I loved the way she could just draw me out of myself. The way her smile would lend itself to me letting out all my feelings. I knew the convent way of life was not easy for her, that her personal life kept her from committing to the order completely. That is why she left the order after two years. I stayed but we remained close friends writing often to each other. I was so happy, and so was she, to have her in my life again when my prayers and my request was granted to be assigned at Saint Michael's, the same parish Katharine was working. We were overjoyed.

(SISTER MARGARET becomes a little unsettled, seeing that the slightly inebriated FATHER PATRICK FLYNN with drink in hand, was making his way over from the bar.)

SISTER MARGARET

I know that much of her life was troubled that she had doubts but she always kept an open heart ready to give to others, I love her for that and she will always be in my prayers.

(FATHER PATRICK FLYNN rest his empty hand on BOBBY's shoulder and takes a sip from his glass. BOBBY turns the camera onto FATHER FLYNN)

FATHER PATRICK FLYNN

I came to Saint Michael's just out of seminary, still a boy really.

(FATHER FLYNN takes another drink from his glass almost finishing it off. SISTER MARGARET looks down and away)

FATHER PATRICK FLYNN

Katherine was a senior at the time and what a remarkable student she was. She graduated with straight A's and getting a scholarship to Saint Thomas Aquinas College. I wort to her often and visited her a few times.

(FATHER FLYNN finishes his drink)

FATHER PATRICK FLYNN

She only stated at the collage for two years then joined the Dominican Sisters.

(FATHER FLYNN looks over at SISTER MARGARET then at his empty glass and then back at the bar.)

FATHER PATRICK FLYNN

I wrote to her there too even visited once.

(FATHER FLYNN pauses for a second,
slight regret on his face)

About spiritual matters and philosophy.

(SISTER MARGARET under her breath and
saltily sacrosciatic)

SISTER MARGARET

Spiritual matters my eye.

(FATHER FLYNN catches the attention of
the bar tender and signals for a refill.)

FATHER PATRICK FLYNN

She left the order, came back to Saint Michael's working in the administrative office and teaching a history class for the juniors and seniors. All the students loved her and wanted her as their counselor. Even at the worst of times she always had a smile and a kind word for everyone.

(The bartender comes up to FATHER FLYNN with a fresh glass to replace the empty one. FATHER FLYNN nods with relief and takes a refreshing sip of his Irish Honey.)

(The Irish music plays on)

FADE TO BLACK.

ACT TWO

(The Irish folk music still playing)

FADE UP: more light on stage right. Stage left mostly darkened with some highlights

(BOBBY meanders the growing crowd over on sage left. All we here is some mumbles; laughing;

crying sum outbursts of sing-along with the Irish music. Brightly lit, sitting at a table are Katherine's four best friends MARRY SWEENEY; PATRICIA O'MALLEY; ANNA HENNESSEY; and KATIE O'DONNELL. There are people at other tables but the light is dim there. KATIE O'DONNELL swirls a half empty whiskey glass)

KATIE O'DONNELL

I need another fucking drink.

MARRY SWEENEY

I think we all need another drink.

(ANNA holds up her glass)

ANNA HENNESSEY

I think so too. Let's all have another for Katherine

(PATRICIA picks up the bottle of whiskey and fills the four classes up)

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

Let's have a toast to Katherine Francis Heaney, the lady of the day, our good friend and confidant the keeper of all our secrets. The best of all of us, that sanctimonious goody two shoes bitch.

MARRY SWEENEY

Okay Patricia that's enough

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

Enough what Marry? You don't think I can talk about my best friend that way? Well... She was a goody two shoes and she fucking died on me, that makes her a bitch.

(PATRICIA starts to cry)

Now lets just toast our best friend and fellow bitch okay?

(the ladies laugh a little raise their glasses each glass touching the other)

KATIE O'DONNELL

To Katherine

MARRY SWEENEY

Katherine

ANNA HENNESSEY

Our Katherine

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

Katherine

(A rain cloud drifts over the bay windows darkening the room for a few moments. The girls sit quite with their thoughts. The noise of the other guests rises. The sound of ANNA HENNESSEY's Irish Keltic music fills the room. The cloud passes the noise subsides)

KATIE O'DONNELL

Does any one think it odd, other than me, that Father Flynn has been with the Parish all these years. I mean he has been here since he got out of seminary school.

MARRY SWEENEY

Maybe he likes being with the parish?

KATIE O'DONNELL

Maybe he liked being with Katherine. Kathy didn't leave the Sisters of the Rosary just because she had a crises of faith. Heck anybody could count backwards. The months from Michael's birthday, she had a crises of bulging belly. By the way where is that bastard son of her's? He didn't have the decency to show up at the funeral

MARRY SWEENEY

Please!

KATIE O'DONNELL

No Marry, no please, sometime this shit is going to come out and it might as well be now. Fucking Father Flynn is the fucking father of Michael.

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

Katie we all know it and Katherine accepted it, it was her bed to make and she laid in it.

KATIE O'DONNELL

And Father Flynn's too and it killed her.

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

Maybe it did kill her, that was the life she chose. The life she wanted

KATIE O'DONNELL

Bullshit.

ANNA HENNESSEY

(shouts out loud enough for Father Flynn the
acting DJ to hear)

Will someone please change that CD. "If you are going to play Irish crap play Pat
O'Connorly or Kate McMurray"

(The music of Pat O'Connorly comes through
the room, the crowd claps cheers and sings
along.)

MARRY SWEENEY

Wasn't that your music Anna?

ANNA HENNESSEY

Yes it is, I am tired of listening to it, and it seems everyone else was too.

KATIE O'DONNELL

I wasn't going to say anything.

(PATRICIA fills all the glasses again)

ANNA HENNESSEY

We all loved Katherine. She was always there for us, the good times and the bad. She kept
her own troubles to herself for the most. Not in a sanctimonious way. She wanted to be
there for us. I was I could say I was there for her near the end but I wasn't.

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

None of us were there for her in the end. We all were doing our own things. She called me a few weeks before she died. I told her I would get back to her, I never did. Crap, if there is going to be a judgment day I will have hell to pay.

MARRY SWEENEY

Well, now I know who the father of Michael is.

(the three other girls laugh)

MARRY SWEENEY

Ever since high school Katherine has been my best friend, helping me with my studies, comforting me when I couldn't get a date for the sophomore prom. She introduced me to Tom you know. I thought the world of her, never knew about any of her problems. She was my anchor when I had doubts. I only wanted to see the perfect Katherine. Her crises of faith, her troubled relationship with her son, an affair with Father Flynn I didn't want to see any of that.

ANNA HENNESSEY

None of us did Marry.

MARRY SWEENEY

So if anyone is going to hell for neglecting her best friend it is going to be me.

KATIE O'DONNELL

No one is going to hell Marry.

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

Someone is. Whoever gave Kathy those sleeping pills is going to hell.

MARRY SWEENEY

Jesus what are you saying.

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

What do you think I am saying Marry?

(a moment of silence passes. Father Flynn
put s on a Bruce Springsteen CD)

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

Let me put t on the line Marry. Katherine intentionally took an overdose of sleeping pills. She took her own life.

MARRY SWEENEY

I don't believe you.

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

It was a suicide Marry. Father Flynn somehow had the death declared accidental.

MARRY SWEENEY

(stunned)

My God that is unbelievable.

ANNA HENNESSEY

Unbelievable maybe but it is the truth Marry. Our Katherine was in more trouble than any one could imagine or wanted to imagine.

MARRY SWEENEY

Who gave her the pills?

ANNA HENNESSEY

I have my hunches.

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

Me too.

(ANNA and PATRICIA look over at
KATIE)

KATIE O'DONNELL

I didn't know, didn't know she was going to kill herself. Jesus Christ I didn't know!

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

What the hell where you thinking Katie?

MARRY SWEENEY

O my God!

KATIE O'DONNELL

(starting to cry)

She called me up, told me she was not sleeping well, wanted to know if I has some extra sleeping pills. I hadn't talked with her in a few months. I knew she was having troubles with Michael that he had run off. I didn't think she would do something like this.

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

That's right Katie you didn't think you hardly ever think. I don't know how you made it this far. Its you that should be dead not Katherine. With all the drugging and boozing you do you should be the one dead and berried not Katherine.

KATIE O'DONNELL

Shut up Pat.

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

It must be your good looks and your half way decent brain that keeps you alive. O and lets not forget your 'me first' attitude.

KATIE O'DONNELL

You better keep that quick tongue of yours still Pat. You are no saint either.

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

I know Katie.

KATIE O'DONNELL

You and all your political aspirations for yourself and that ridiculous husband of yours, he couldn't punch his way out of a city council position. And who do you think he is getting his dope from?

ANNA HENNESSEY

That's enough Katie

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

I am as much to blame as anyone. She probably called you after she called me. I shrugged off the voicemail and never got back to her. Ever since this whole thing I have been thinking about getting out of politics and getting a divorce too. You are rith about one thing Katie, Mike is ridiculous.

(The four ladies sit in silence.

The Boss sings ‘Thunder Road’. MARRY pours out another round of drinks.)

MARRY SWEENEY

I need another drink after all that. I learned more about Katherine in the last few days and hours than over the last twenty five years. What I knew most about her came from our long talks about God and religion. She spent most of her life involved in that. I know for sure she wanted to believe in God even if she had doubts.

ANNA HENNESSEY

I think we all learned a lot the past few days. I am sorry life let Katherine down, and it let her down in a big way. Much of that is her own doing. Part of life is opening up to others, becoming vulnerable and letting others in, accepting there help. Katherine was always there for us but that is only half the picture. She never let us be there for her, never fully participated. In the end it was her undoing. God or no God. I do not think a onetime reach out at the end of her life would have made much of a difference. It might have but I think things were too set.

PATRICIA O’MALLEY

Ware all like Katherine in so many ways, I was able to let her in but not with many others.

(PATRICIA reaches out hands to the others)

PATRICIA O’MALLEY

You all know me despite my self. I am so lucky to have you all in my life for so long. You too Katie, even though you slept with my husband. Don’t bother denying it, he confessed all about it.

(KATIE warmly squeezes PATRICIA’S hand)

KATIE O’DONNELL

I can really screw things up, I have no excuse for my life. ‘The something better’ I always wanted, I never found it. It was all my own doing. The best think in my life was the four of you and now Katy is gone. I don’t have much of a faith. What I do still have is you three and I want to hang on to that.

ANNA HENNESSEY

You hang on, we can all hang on.

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

Katherine may have lost herself in this world and part of that may have been our doing.
We can make a pact here today that we will be there for each other so that none of us get
lost.

MARRY SWEENEY

Sisters

ANNA HENNESSEY

Sisters together

KATIE O'DONNELL

Sisters forever

PATRICIA O'MALLEY

Yes sisters

(the four of them sit quiet for a few moments
holding hands.)

MARRY SWEENEY

Wasn't the funeral mass wonderful?

(they all burst out laughing)

FADE TO BLACK.